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THE GULF BRIDGED





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THE GULF BRIDGED;

OR,

'THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL'

IN THE WORLD TO COME.

With a Note on the Creation of the Universe.

'Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed.'—LUKE xvi. 26.

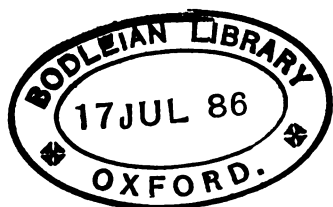
'Christ died for the ungodly.'—ROM. v. 6.

'He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger for ever.'—PSA. ciii. 9.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

It is a matter of common observation that souls burdened with sin pass daily into the unseen world ; and it is difficult to see how anyone who accepts the Bible as the only standard of doctrine can doubt that they meet with a just punishment there.

Is that punishment endless ? Will the condemned soul ever be cleansed from sin, and freed from further punishment ? These are questions to which Bible students give very different answers. Some reply by quoting certain well-known texts, in which the eternity of punishment appears to be clearly laid down ; others bring forward numerous passages which, as they allege, teach equally clearly that all men will be saved eventually.

These two conclusions are generally assumed to be irreconcilable; and whilst the Universalist denies the eternity of punishment, the Orthodox denies as strenuously that salvation can ever become universal. May not both be true? Cannot the everlasting sentence be arrested in the course of its execution? Is there not some key to reconcile the apparent contradiction?

The writer would give an affirmative answer to these questions, and show that everlasting punishment and universal salvation are to be found revealed side by side in the Word of God, and that each forms a perfectly congruous part of one symmetrical whole, the key to the apparent paradox being found in that everlasting Gospel which is 'the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.'

C. C. U.

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THE GULF BRIDGED.



I.

THE doctrine of endless punishment appears inconsistent with the character of God as revealed in the Scripture, and must therefore be rejected, unless it is supported by direct Scriptural testimony on the subject.

It can hardly be denied that opinions opposed to the doctrine of the eternity of punishment, as it is generally held, are daily becoming more common ; whilst to every Christian the spread of such opinions, *so far as they are contrary to the Word of God*, must be a subject of deep regret. At the same time, it is evident that if the orthodox view on the subject differs substantially from

the doctrine taught by the Bible, an incalculable injury is being done to the cause of Christ throughout the world ; for no one who has become familiar, even to a small extent, with the thoughts of the times can doubt that this view exercises an inconceivably wide influence upon the minds of men, radically affecting their views as to the nature and character of God, and presents to many thoughtful minds the greatest religious difficulty of which they are conscious. The existence of evil at all is not easy to account for, but the existence of eternal objectless evil in the domain of the Almighty and All-good is impossible to understand.

Every true Christian is thus brought face to face with a solemn responsibility, first to know and then to make known the mind of the Spirit in relation to these solemn and eternal truths ; and those who, seeing the difficulty of the enigma presented to their minds, are content to let the matter drop without a patient and prayerful investigation of the Scriptural testimony on the subject ; or who, being convinced that the orthodox view is

unscriptural, 'fearing lest they should be cast out of the synagogue,' allow themselves to be deterred from testifying against it, must not reckon themselves amongst the followers either of Mr. Greatheart or Mr. Valiant-for-the-truth. God has given us Reason that we may understand the revelation which He has made to us in His Word, and though fully conscious that Reason must go hand in hand with Faith, and from the infinity of the subject be confined within the limits of Revelation, yet we may believe that in seeking to obtain a clearer insight into the character of Him 'Whom to know is life eternal,' and a fuller understanding of His ways, we ^{John xvii.} are not only performing a duty to which ³ God has called us, but have the promise of guidance in our search from Him Who has said, 'If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of Me,' and Who has promised ^{James i. 5.} 'to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask ^{Luke xi. 13.} Him.'

If the orthodox view as to the future state of the lost had no influence whatever upon the world outside, yet in observing its

influence within the Church and upon the conceptions of God entertained by some of its holiest members, we should, nevertheless be led to ask, whether a doctrine which can produce in *such* men such absolutely savage conceptions of the Deity, can be the doctrine taught by the Word of God. Take as an example the words of Richard Baxter (one of the holiest men of his time). What can be more radically inconsistent both with the letter and spirit of the Divine Revelation than the idea conveyed by the following extract from his celebrated 'Saints' Rest' (abridged edition, pp. 87-89), where, speaking of the punishment of the lost, he says :

'The exceeding greatness of such torments may appear by considering that these torments are the fruit of Divine vengeance—*that the Almighty takes pleasure in them.* The everlasting flames of Hell will not be thought too hot for the rebellious, and when they have burned through millions of ages *He will not repent Him* of the evil which has befallen them. Wrath is terrible, but *revenge is implacable.* When the great God shall say, " My

rebellious creatures shall now *pay for* all their abuse of My patience," then will He be revenged for every abused mercy, and for all their neglects of Christ and Grace. Consider also that *though God had rather* men would accept Christ and mercy, yet when they persist in rebellion *He will take pleasure in their execution.*'

Read in the light of human experience, what a picture does this present! How luridly it illumines the fact stated by one who has made it his business to acquaint himself with the bitter state of the outcast poor, that in London itself, the very heart of 'Christian' England, thousands of homes may be consecutively visited in which not fifty individuals will be found who make even the poor profession of interest in eternal realities which may be implied from an occasional attendance at a place of worship. Can this truly represent the God of love and peace and consolation? Is this the conduct which we expect from One Who has said, 'As I live I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way'

Ezek.
xxxiii. 11;
and see
chap. xviii.
23, 32.

- Lam. iii. 33 and live?' Is this the God 'Who doth not afflict willingly or grieve the children of men;'
- Id. 31, 32. 'Who will not cast off for ever, but though He cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies;'
- 1 Tim. ii. 4. 'Who *will have* all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth; 'Who is
- 2 Peter iii. 9. '*not willing* that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance; 'and has proved His love by the sacrifice of Himself in the person of His Son? Can this, again, be the God, likeness to Whom is the highest ideal for man, and of Whom though we
- 1 John iii. know so little, yet we know this, 'that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is,' and Who is not only holy, but holy with the same kind of holiness (differing only in degree) which He requires of us, His creatures, and has given us this
- 1 Peter i. 15, 16. command, '*As* He Who hath called you is holy, *so* be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy; 'and Who in that 'Golden Rule' enunciated by Christ Himself teaches us to 'Love our enemies, bless them that curse us, do

good to them that hate us, and pray for them that despitefully use us ; that ' (mark the word *that*) ' we may be the children of our Father Who is in heaven ' ? Let us look at it fairly from this point of view. ' True holiness,' says the compiler of Cruden's Concordance, ' consists in a conformity to the Nature and Will of God.' Godliness is God-likeness ; and if it is true that God takes pleasure in the torture of His creatures, then whenever our hearts go out in love and pity towards fallen and suffering humanity, and we allow our sympathies to be aroused to feel for those whose sins bring upon them even in this world a just retribution, we are becoming less holy, and are guilty of a departure from the Divine standard. Surely the contrary is true. ' To crush Lam. iii. 34. under His feet all the prisoners of the earth the Lord approveth not.' ' For I am merciful, Jer. iii. 12, 13. saith the Lord, I will not keep my anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity.'

This, then, is the first conclusion to which the Scripture irresistibly brings us, a conclusion upon which, but for statements on the part of godly men, such as those of Richard Baxter

just quoted, it would seem almost superfluous to insist—viz., *that God can have no pleasure in the eternal torment of His creatures*, and it is well that at the outset we should realize the full significance of this conclusion. It establishes at once a strong *primâ facie* case for the ultimate salvation of the lost, and throws upon those who support the other view the onus of showing that God is unable to terminate a state of things which is not only inconsistent with human ideas of justice and holiness, but which brings Him ‘no pleasure,’ and which He ‘willeth and approveth not;’ for granted that God ‘willeth not the death of a sinner,’ there are only two conditions possible as affecting the final state of the lost—either God is, or He is not, able to restore them; either He can, or cannot, terminate a state of affairs utterly abhorrent to His very nature.

A merely weak and ineffectual willingness to save is not a conceivable attribute of the Almighty God. When the leper came to Jesus, he had no doubt as to His ability to cure his leprosy. His impassioned appeal, ‘Lord, if Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean,’ was at

once responded to with the gracious words, 'I will, be thou clean;' and can we who have so much more knowledge of Christ and His mission than that poor leper, and have His personal assurance, 'All power is given unto Me in heaven and earth,' believe that in the future His power can be any less, and that to any repentant sinner in the ages to come He will answer not, 'I will, be thou clean,' but 'I would, but it is impossible : remain therefore as thou art, hopeless, helpless, unsaved, unbefriended'? Do not, on the contrary, all His words and actions assure us that if He is forced, like David of old, in order to maintain the just rule of His kingdom, to pronounce sentence of banishment against His sons, our King will, like David, 'yet devise means whereby His banished shall not be expelled from Him'? His promise stands sure throughout the ages past and future : 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.'

Matt.
xxviii. 18.

2 Sam. xiv
14.

John xii.
32.

This orthodox view has had another very injurious effect. It has driven many to deny the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible, the fundamental doctrine upon which alone a

superstructure of dogmatic theology can be erected. We are assured, say they, by those who speak with authority, that the Bible teaches us that God is Love, and further that He is just and holy, and yet that He will keep the majority of His creatures in an eternity of pain, to which He has Himself foredoomed them. Now, say they, such a course appears to us equally inconsistent with love, justice and holiness, and therefore we are compelled to reject the claims of the Bible. This, from their point of view, is a very natural position to take up, and though it is one which exhibits an unwarrantable confidence in human judgment when brought into conflict with Divine revelation, yet the responsibility of driving anyone to take such a position rests to a great extent (assuming that that view is unscriptural) with those who teach the orthodox view.

So far, we have dealt only with the necessary effect of the orthodox view upon the ideas of professing Christians as to the character of the God they worship; but it is when we go outside the bounds of the

Christian community that we realize how widespread the effects of this view are, and what an influence it has upon the hearts of men. How many apparently honest seekers after God stumble at the very threshold of Revealed Truth through the doubt whether He can be Love, Who since He tells us that 'many are called, but few chosen,' and that His people are a 'little flock,' must, if the generally received doctrine on the subject be true, have from all eternity

Matt. xx.
16.
Luke xii.
32.

'Decreed,
Reserved, and destined, to eternal woe,
Whatever doing,

Milton,
'Par. Lost,'
ii. 160.

the vast majority of the human race; whilst the opponents of religion find in the same difficulty a weapon which they are not slow to avail themselves of, and whose thrusts it needs the firmest faith in God on the part of the Christian who holds the orthodox view and the most fixed distrust of the conclusions of his own reason to parry.

Take the late John Stuart Mill as an example. In him we find a man of singular

earnestness and candour, who did not hesitate to make considerable admissions in favour of that Christian system which he denied and opposed. In his 'Autobiography,' pp. 39-41, he quotes with evident sympathy and approval, and as representing his own feelings, his father's opinions upon the subject. He says of him :

'He found it impossible to believe that a world so full of evil was the work of an Author combining infinite power with perfect goodness and righteousness. Think (he used to say) of a being who would make a hell (*i.e.*, a hell from which there will be no escape), who would create the human race with the infallible foreknowledge, *and therefore with the intention*, that the great majority of men were to be consigned to horrible and everlasting torment.'

It is not the existence of evil and punishment which is the difficulty ; it is the existence of these things leading to no higher good which would be unworthy of the God of Love ; and if once we see ourselves as children in training for a higher state under

the careful hands of a loving Father Who corrects us 'for our profit, that we may be ^{Heb. xii. 10.} partakers of His holiness,' the difficulty disappears. To quote again from the 'Autobiography' of J. S. Mill :

' Much must be done and much must be learned by children for which rigid discipline and known liability to punishment are indispensable as means ;' and the same law may be expected to operate in the spiritual world.

To the child, the punishment and discipline may appear altogether evil, but they are good nevertheless ; and those who seek to understand the mystery of the existence of evil in God's universe must find the key in the fact which follows as a necessary deduction from our belief that the Almighty is Love and yet permits evil—that there is no such thing as evil, but apparent evil is only good misunderstood ; and if we could look into the future and see the so-called evil in its ultimate effects, submission to suffering would not be a result of effort, but a logical sequence. We should know with an assurance which is

even now the heritage of Faith, that not often merely, but always,

‘Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.’

This is the only possible alternative to a Manichæism which would put the necessity for the existence of evil beyond the Almighty power of God.

The case of the late J. S. Mill is not, however, an isolated example. What is the difficulty most often urged, both by sceptics and honest doubters, when the claims of God in Christ are urged upon them? Is it not most often one founded upon such passages as the following :

sd. ix. ‘The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh.’

n. ix. ‘Whom He will He hardeneth.’

n. ix. ‘Even for this purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew My power in thee.’

v. xvi. ‘The Lord hath made . . . the wicked for the day of evil.’

And although the Christian has in ‘It is written’ a complete answer to every possible objection founded upon mere human reason and ethics, yet a candid mind

must freely admit that when these texts are coupled with the orthodox view of the unchangeableness of the state of the lost, and the question is propounded, 'How can God be Love, and yet keep in endless and hopeless torment the great majority of mankind?' or it is asked, 'How can the loving heart of Jesus enjoy the glories of heaven, and how can even a human heart (with its sympathies so far inferior to His) enjoy the blessedness of that happy place, when there must be there the consciousness of the untold agonies of the lost, some near and dear by every human tie to others who are with the blest, and all alike dear to the Saviour of mankind?' a difficulty is raised which, if not actually insurmountable, yet makes it incumbent upon us to ask ourselves, 'Is it written?'

Our Lord in one amongst His many parables seems deliberately to lift the veil which separates the present from the future state, and gives us a momentary glimpse, in the story of Dives and Lazarus, of the place of torment and of 'Abraham's bosom;' and the first thing that strikes us is that there is some

Luke xvi.
19-31.

means of intercommunication between the spirits of the departed, and that the lost and the saved, the comforted and the tormented, are mutually conscious of each other's condition. This fact in itself goes far to show that the orthodox view is unscriptural, for it is inconceivable that the saved can look unmoved on such a scene as a hopeless hell would present. 'In hell Dives lifted up his eyes, being in torment,' and saw Abraham and Lazarus, and spoke to the former in a way which must have aroused his sympathies to feel for him in the keenest way. Abraham, on the other hand, converses with Dives not as an outcast, but as a 'son,'—not as one without hope, but as one likely under his fiery trial to listen to reason and argument; and elicits from him, who had whilst on earth no care for the poor Lazarus at his gate, the proof that the punishment was having that corrective effect which (without trespassing upon that principle laid down by Hegel that punishment is the necessary rebound of an unworthy action) may be said, unless we admit the right of mere brute force, to be the

essence of all true punishment, whether human or Divine; for he who formerly cared for no one but himself now fears for his brethren, 'lest they also come into this place of torment.' It is specially worthy of notice in this connection that God has laid down this corrective effect as the object of His punishment, for He says that whilst 'No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous, nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby;' its object being, as we have already seen, that we might 'be partakers of His holiness'; and no single example can be quoted from the Scripture of any punishment which was not remedial, either in its effect on the sufferer or on others. It is true that Abraham says that between saved and lost, *before the judgment day, at any rate*, there is a great gulf fixed, so that they who would go from haaven to hell to save the lost (blessed promise of our future likeness to our Divine Master) cannot, neither can the lost themselves pass it from hell to heaven; yet no-

Heb. xii.
II.

where does he say that God, Who has in Jesus bridged that gulf on earth, is unable or unwilling to bridge it in the same way in the world to come.

II.

That the wicked are condemned to everlasting punishment appears upon the surface of the Scripture, but further revelation on the subject may be hidden in its depths.

In an earnest attempt to meet difficulties such as those indicated in the previous section, a vast amount of ingenuity and learning have been expended by many very able men, who have established two important points and deduced from them certain theories as to the non-eternity of future punishment; and it becomes necessary, before going further with the argument, to consider briefly the two points which have been established, and the two theories which different schools of thought have deduced from them.

The first point, then, which has been established is, that much of the Scriptural language in which the punishment of the wicked is

described is of a figurative nature. This fact no thoughtful person in these days can deny. The notion that hell is a place of literal fire and brimstone, where physical torture will be endured, has passed into the limbo of other exploded superstitions. When the belief in the resurrection of the same natural body which we put into the grave faded away, the Scriptural doctrine that 'it is sown a natural body but raised a spiritual body' took its place, and it was perceived that, like the wheat planted in the earth, that which comes up, although the same body, in that it has the same form and character, and bears the imprint of that which the seed-corn has itself endured, is yet not formed of the same chemical atoms. With the belief in the resurrection of a spiritual body came as a necessary consequence the certainty that the only punishment to which that spiritual body can be subject (and indeed the only punishment which could conceivably affect it either for good or evil) must be a spiritual punishment. This does not in any way decrease, but rather increases the severity of the suffer-

1 Cor. xv.
44

ing to be anticipated. The pangs of a guilty conscience are worse than those of a broken limb. The agony of remorse wrings the soul with sharper torment than that with which disease can wring the body, and the martyr may, through the joy that fills his spirit, be actually unconscious of the flame which gnaws his flesh. It is but a gross spirit which in its earthly tabernacle is incapable of deeper pleasures and severer sufferings than those which affect the body. The change, therefore, from physical torment to spiritual suffering is a change not to a milder, but to a more severe form of punishment. Nothing can be more clear than that punishment, the most severe which our minds can contemplate, is the idea intended to be conveyed by the various figures employed in the sacred page.

Mark ix.
44.

It has been asserted that in the well-known passage, 'Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched,' the purifying influence of fire is alone referred to, and that the office of the worm is also to purify by consuming that which is vile. Whether or not this is so in this particular passage we need not stay to

inquire, for the Bible abounds with others which are incapable of such an interpretation.

Three examples will suffice :

‘The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking *vengeance*.’ 2 Thess. i. 7, 8.

‘Suffering the *vengeance* of eternal fire.’ Jude 7.

‘The smoke of their *torment* ascendeth up for ever and ever.’ Rev. xiv. 11.

These three texts, and many others which might be quoted, represent one aspect of Divine punishment, namely, the vindication of God’s outraged majesty in the punishment of the sinner.

Before proceeding to the consideration of the other point which has been established, the two theories of the non-eternity of punishment may at once be discussed.

One of these, known as the doctrine of ‘Annihilation’ or ‘Conditional Immortality’ (everlasting existence conditional on faith in Christ), suggests that after an unknown length of time has elapsed, the punished soul will cease to exist; the other, known as the doctrine of ‘The Restitution of all things,’ that the punishment suffered is of

a remedial kind, not only as regards the future, but in the nature of an atonement for the past ; and having been endured for a certain length of time, the soul will be justly released and admitted to the presence of God in heaven. Neither of these theories, it is well to observe, denies that God will visit sin with untold and well-deserved punishment, and that for those who reject the

Heb. x. 27. Saviour there remains 'a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries;' but both allege that it is inconsistent with the revealed character of God that no period should be put to the duration of that punishment. Each of these theories is (apart from the question of what is directly revealed in the Bible on the subject) open to very serious objections. The objection to the doctrine of annihilation is twofold. In the first place, it does not at all meet the difficulty it is intended to cope with, for it is obvious that if it is inconsistent with the character of God to punish the wicked with endless torment, it must be

equally or almost equally inconsistent to punish them, first with torment for the whole remainder of their existence, and then with the extinction of existence itself. Such a hope, if it be a hope at all, is not one worthy of the name, still less is it worthy of Him Who has called Himself 'the God of hope,' Romans xv. 13. and is fitly described in the words of Milton :

' Our final hope Par. Lost,
ii. 142-151.

Is flat despair. We must exasperate
The Almighty Victor to spend all His rage,
And that must end us ; that must be our cure,
To be no more ? Sad cure ; for who would lose,
Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
Those thoughts that wander through eternity
To perish rather, swallowed up and lost
In the wide womb of uncreated night,
Devoid of sense and motion ?'

But this is not the only objection. The idea of annihilation is utterly unscientific (or in other words it is repugnant to the laws by which God rules this material universe) ; and although we cannot lay it down as clearly proved that God rules His spiritual and material kingdoms according to the same laws (although numerous indications that

He does so have been pointed out by modern writers, such as the Duke of Argyll in 'The Reign of Law,' and Professor Drummond in 'Natural Law in the Spiritual World'), yet all analogy points distinctly that way, and the unchangeable character of God, and the free use in the Scriptures of natural processes to illustrate spiritual truths, is a further confirmation of our belief that it is so. 'Annihilation' is a term not found in the vocabulary of the man of science, who tells us that in this universe nothing ever ceases to exist. Matter passes constantly from one form to another: at one time it is visible, at another invisible, and then again the same atoms take visible form in an endless cycle, but the matter remains always the same in quantity, and the energy of which the various forces of nature (heat, magnetism, electricity, etc.) are the manifestation in like manner passes constantly from form to form, but in all its varied changes is neither added to nor destroyed.* Matter and energy have, in fact,

* See note at p. 67.

proved to be indestructible ; and can we think it probable that that far more subtle element the soul alone wants, that attribute of permanence and indestructibility which, amidst ceaseless change, is the law of the Universe ?

The doctrine of 'restitution,' on the other hand, has this fatal weakness, that in limiting the duration of the punishment to which the sinner is condemned, it puts a limit to the infinite abhorrence which God has against sin, and at the same time—in the form, at any rate, in which it is currently embodied—it does away with the unique character of the atonement of Christ as being the only possible 'full, perfect, and sufficient satisfaction' for the sins of the whole world, and teaches that the punishment of the sinner will be a just compensation or atonement for the breach of God's holy law.

But it is when these two theories are brought to the test of the Word of God, and the question is asked, 'Is it written ?' that it becomes apparent that they cannot be sustained ; and in considering the Scriptural testimony on the subject, we can at the same time consider the second point which has

been established, namely, that the Greek words translated in our English version 'eternal,' 'everlasting,' 'for ever and ever,' do not necessarily in themselves indicate the idea of eternity, but literally transcribed would stand thus, 'age-lasting,' 'to the ages of the ages.' This is undoubtedly true, and is a necessity of the case, for in the whole Greek language there is no word exactly corresponding to our English expression. It is, however, important to observe that the words used are the strongest contained in the language, and express in the strongest manner of which the writers were capable the nearest approach to eternity of which they could form a conception. This will be best seen by comparing various uses of the words in question, and for that purpose a few instances are given in tabular form.

εἰς τοὺς
αἰῶνας τῶν
αἰώνων.
αἰώνιος.

Tormented for ever and
ever. (Rev. xx. 10.)

Everlasting destruction.
(2 Thess. i. 9.)

ἰδ.

These shall go away
into everlasting punish-
ment. (Matt. xxv. 46.)

God that liveth for ever
and ever. (Rev. x. 6.)

The Eternal Spirit.
(Heb. ix. 14.)

But the righteous into
life eternal. (Matt. xxv.
46.)

Everlasting fire. (Matt.
xxv. 41.)

The smoke of their tor-
ment went up for ever and
ever. (Rev. xiv. 11.)

Everlasting life. (John αἰώνιον
vi. 40. εἰς αἰῶνας

They shall reign for αἰῶνων.
ever and ever. (Rev.
xxii. 5.)

In all the above instances we have the words 'αἰώνιος,' or 'εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων,' used not only to express the duration of the punishment of the lost, but to describe the existence of God and the future blessedness of His people; and they are not merely isolated examples, but a similar use of the words occurs again and again in the New Testament; and if in one case they do not convey the idea of eternity, what ground have we for according them a wider meaning in another? The same term being used for all, eternal God, eternal life, and eternal punishment must stand together, and he who denies the one may well be led to doubt the other two.

Before leaving this part of the subject it is interesting to observe that it is precisely upon this question of eternity that the Bible has received from science one of its most interesting confirmations. It is a proposition now freely admitted, that time and space are mere

creations of the mind, conceived for the purpose of enabling us to grasp and realize our material existence, and the material universe around us ; but that, given a spiritual Being independent for its existence on matter, time and space would, as limitations, have no existence for it. Such a Being is God, and how immeasurably in advance of the philosophy of their age the inspired Galilean fishermen were is at once apparent when we find God credited in their writings with just those attributes which we now know from the deductions of reason alone such a Being must possess. The following texts may be cited as cases in point :

- Rev. x. 6. ' There shall be time no longer.'
- 2 Peter iii. 8. ' One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.'
- Rev. xxii. 13. ' I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning *and* the end, the first *and* the last.'
- Rev. i. 4. ' Which is, and which was, and which is to come.'

Having seen that without doing violence to the express teachings of the Scriptures there is no escape from the conclusion that they speak unmistakably of an eternal

punishment for sin, and that as 'He that believeth hath everlasting life,' so 'He that believeth not shall not see life,' or in other words 'hath everlasting death,' it is well to ^{John iii. 36.} observe that, even if there were nothing further revealed on the subject, we should nevertheless not be justified in entertaining hard thoughts of God, nor in assuming that we are fully acquainted with the whole of His mind, since it is one of God's principles in revealing Himself to His creatures that the revelation shall be progressive and according to the capacity of the recipients of it. Such a principle can be traced in the gradual unfolding of truth from Adam to Moses, and from Moses to Christ, and from Christ to the Apostolic times; and our Lord Himself laid it down when in speaking to His disciples He said, 'I have many things to say unto you, but ^{John xvi. 12, 13.} ye cannot bear them now : howbeit, when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth ;' and if one part of His revelation seems to our reason inconsistent with another part, there are two possible explanations of the apparent inconsistency which at

once present themselves. It may be that our reason is at fault, and that to a superior intelligence the apparent inconsistency would not exist ; or that our knowledge of the mind of God is only partial and incomplete, and that a further revelation would make the mystery clear.

Tennyson,
'In Memoriam,'
lvi.

'Oh life as futile then as frail !
Oh for Thy voice to soothe the strife !
What hope of answer, or redress ?
Behind the veil, behind the veil.'

But before we admit even such simple explanations as these, we are bound to consider one even more obvious explanation : What if the further revelation which we require has been already given to us ? What if, whilst near the surface of the great mine of revealed truth there lies the doctrine of eternal punishment, there is in that same mine, though hidden below the surface, a further doctrine not contradictory to the first, but supplemental to it, which, completing the truth upon the subject, disperses all our darkness and difficulty, and justifies God by revealing Him as

He is? Be it ours to dig deeply into this mine, to search the Scriptures that we may know 'the whole counsel of God;' and if we find side by side with the doctrine of the eternal punishment of sin the doctrine of the eventual universality of salvation revealed with equal clearness, let us not assume that the two ideas are incommensurable, but seek grace and guidance to receive both truths, and to understand how, though (like the different colours which together form white light) apparently opposed, each is complementary to the other, and both united form one harmony of truth.

III.

The orthodox view divided into positive and negative propositions. The negative proposition is not supported by Scripture.—God's fundamental right and power to reverse His own decrees on His own terms.—Everlasting punishment and universal salvation are not incompatible.

Let us now analyze the orthodox view, and we shall find that it consists of two

separate and independent propositions, one of which is positive, and the other negative. The positive proposition may be stated as follows: 'The sinner is condemned to punishment, which is absolutely eternal,' and we have seen that this proposition is fully borne out by the Word of God, but the orthodox view goes further, and adds this negative proposition: 'The sinner who passes whilst still under this condemnation into the unseen world, cannot, as he undoubtedly can in this world, turn to God and obtain the pardon of sin and the remission of its punishment.' God's testimony is clear: 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life;' but the orthodox view adds a rider to this, and limits the time during which the 'believing' must commence, to the time of the sinner's life on earth, restricting God in the exercise of His prerogative of pardon and mercy through Christ to the same short period; and we ask very naturally whether there is any Scriptural warrant for such a limitation or restriction. To this question a careful searching of the Bible returns a distinct negative. Nowhere

in Scripture is the limitation expressed. There will no doubt be many who, like the foolish virgins, and the man who had not on a wedding garment, will be shut out from the wedding feast ; but the wedding feast is but the commencement of the wedded life, and those invited guests who were shut out from the feast because they were not ready may nevertheless be reconciled to the bridegroom when the wedded life has begun. They will, like Esau, have for ever missed a blessing ; but their Father may, like Isaac, have ‘ reserved a blessing for them.’

We have already seen that God has Himself assured us that He has no pleasure in the eternal punishment of His creatures ; we may next ask three questions :

1. Can God (eternal condemnation notwithstanding) save the sinner in and from hell ?
2. If He can, may we not from what we know of His character feel assured that He will do so ?
3. Has He promised in His Word that He will do so ?

If to these three questions an affirmative answer can be given, then all difficulties connected with the subject vanish, and God is justified in His judgments.

True, those who are lost, are lost because
 Ex. ix. 12. God has 'hardened their hearts;' they were
 Prov. xvi. 4. 'made' by God 'for the day of evil:' but out of the seeming evil, God is bringing good, using the evil *precisely as He uses it in this world*, and making David's experience true for them, 'Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I have kept Thy Law;' and
 P's. cxix. 67. 'though no chastening for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous,' yet, seeing that 'afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness, unto them that are exercised thereby,' we may well understand how the very Pharaohs and Esaus of this world will, when their fiery trial has broken their hard and selfish spirits, and brought them into a state of submission to their Maker, hereafter thank God for His very judgments, and acknowledge that even His punishments are love. The prodigal in the parable was amply compensated for his long years of

Heb. xii.
 11.

misery by the joy of his reception home, and it was for him, and not for the eldest brother, that the father killed the fatted calf.

It is this bringing of eventual good out of present evil which enables us to say, in answer to St. Paul's question, 'Is God unrighteous Rom. iii. 5. Who taketh vengeance?' No! for 'He will Acts xvii. 31. judge the world (not in vengeance only, but) in righteousness, by that Man Whom He hath ordained.'

The words of the poet Longfellow,

'Though the mills of God grind slowly,
Yet they grind exceeding small;
Though with patience He stands waiting,
With exactness grinds He all,'

may be applied not only to God's judgment but to His mercy too; and though man may to his present cost rebel against God and expose himself to that 'judgment and fiery H. b. x. 27. indignation which shall devour the adversaries,' yet from the very flames of hell he may (and unless his will is destined to triumph over God's will he must) turn to God, and under their severe discipline be led to the Saviour,

Matt. xviii. Who 'came to seek and to save that which
 11. was lost,' and Who has said, without limiting
 His promise to the short time spent in this
 John vi. 37. passing world, '*All* that the Father hath
 given unto Me *shall* come unto Me, and him
 that cometh unto Me I will in nowise cast
 out.' Sinful man will never enjoy that
 triumph which might be found in an ability
 permanently to disfigure God's creation by
 maintaining for ever an attitude of hostility to
 Him, which is (with his singular insight into
 the workings of the human heart) referred to
 by Milton in 'Paradise Lost,' and

'Which if not Victory is yet Revenge.'

If this is so, then the great mystery is solved,
 and when the last soul has 'lifted up his eyes
 being in torment,' and has beheld not Abraham
 John i. 29. only, but 'the Lamb of God which taketh away
 the sins of the world,' and, seeing Him, has
 obtained, through the benefit of His great
 atonement, pardon and peace, then again
 harmony will be at length restored to God's
 once fair creation, and the universe will once
 more be perfectly attuned to its Maker's

praise, and God looking down upon it, as at the first, will pronounce it to be very good. In dealing with this subject a broad distinction is always either stated or implied between the state of the sinner on earth and his state in hell, and for this distinction there is no Scriptural warrant. The sinner is all his life shut out from God : he is, as we are told, ' condemned already ' (*i.e.*, in this world), and the wrath of God abides (not will begin to abide when he enters on the future state, but abides now in this world) upon him ; and though sentence against his evil works is not executed speedily, yet the sentence has been pronounced, and the wrath and condemnation exist whilst the sinner is still in the body : but the wrath is not fully manifested, the sentence is suspended and its execution postponed, in order that before Judgment speaks in tones of thunder, the pleading voice of Love may be heard in the sinner's heart. It is on this misconception of the sinner's true state before God now, that the misconception of his future state is based ; for if, as is freely admitted, God is both able and willing to forgive the

John iii. 18.

Eccles.
viii. 11.

sinner, to take away his sin and to reverse his punishment in this world, and there is no radical change in the sinner's state before God when he passes into the next world, there is no ground for supposing that God will act towards him hereafter on principles differing from those on which He has acted in the past. But it is said the sinner will then have *finally* rejected the Saviour's love, and the offer of
2 Cor. vi. 2. mercy will be for ever withdrawn—'Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.' It is on this point that the whole question hinges. Is a lifelong rejection of Christ final? To this we answer that there cannot conceivably be any finality until God has accomplished His purpose. 'He must reign till He has put all His enemies under His feet.' He must 'seek until He find' that which was lost. The 'now' of the 'day of salvation' has been protracted, certainly, through two thousand years of the world's history, and there is no reason to suppose that it will not extend for the same length of time after this world is done.

If, however, this argument is not to be ac-

cepted as final and conclusive on the point, it may be said further that a proposition bearing such momentous consequences for so large a portion of the human race, freighted as it is with their endless happiness or endless woe, must, if it is to be received, be supported by the direct statements of the Word of God. If God has said it, then we must bow in humble submission to His Word, although it may transcend our reason; but when we search the Scriptures we find an entire want of Scriptural authority for any such assertion, and on the contrary (in addition to the numerous texts in which the doctrine of universal salvation is clearly laid down, and which are referred to at length in the fourth section), we find certain indications that the idea of mercy and forgiveness in the world to come is familiar to the mind of God. It is only in accordance with such an idea that we can receive in its simplicity the statement of St. Peter that our Saviour by His death 'went ^{1 Peter iii, 19, 20.} and preached unto the spirits in prison which were disobedient in the days of Noah' (a proceeding of cruel tantalization if there was

Matt. xii.
32.

no redress for them), and can read as otherwise than misleading the statement relative to the sin against the Holy Ghost, that it has never forgiveness, 'neither in this *world*, neither in the world to come.' The preaching to 'the spirits in prison' must have been a preaching of the same 'Gospel' as to the living, for its object is stated to have been, 'that they might be judged *according to man in the flesh*, but live according to God in the Spirit.'

1 Pet. iv.
6.

But here we are met by a difficulty which will occur to many minds. 'Is it not,' say they, 'a contradiction in terms to assert that the sinful soul is condemned to everlasting punishment, and yet that the dread sentence will never in one single case be fully carried out?—by so doing you make God reverse His own most solemn decree.' To this we answer that the question is not one dependent on mere numbers, but if God can be shown to have reversed His own decree in one single instance, then there is no reason to suppose that He cannot do so in the case of every soul condemned to eternal punishment.

Certainly this does make God reverse His own decree, but there is no contradiction involved in His doing so. The 'law of the Medes and Persians which altereth not,' is a law not in accordance with human ideas of justice of the present day. To the power which has the right to make the law, be it king or be it people, is in all human affairs conceded the power to reverse its own decrees. The statutes under which we are ruled to-day are not all the same under which we were ruled yesterday, and they will no doubt change to-morrow—some have been extended, some modified, and some abolished altogether; and shall we deny to the Divine that which we freely concede to the human lawgiver? It is so, too, with the right to pardon. The Queen, the fountain of justice, through her minister the judge condemns the offender according to law, and because she is the fountain of justice and the author of the sentence, in her is vested the prerogative of pardon and mercy: for instance, a man has committed a murder, and when he is convicted the law says to him, 'You shall die.' He is

from that moment under the condemnation of death, and the law has done with him—it only remains for its just sentence to be carried out ; but here another power steps in. The Queen pardons him, and he steps out of prison a free man. Yesterday he was condemned to die, and in the eyes of the law he was as good as dead ; but to-day he is free. The condemnation is removed, and yet there is no contradiction. The condemnation is no less real because the sentence has been commuted ; but the crime has been pardoned, and therefore the criminal is not to bear its penalty.

Let us take another illustration. A patient suffering from a deadly disease goes to doctor after doctor, but all pronounce his disease mortal and his case hopeless ; at last he goes to some more skilful physician, who tells him not to despair, as he has a remedy for his disease. The patient takes the remedy, and lives. The remedy has, by removing the disease, reversed the condemnation which the inexorable laws of nature had pronounced against the man, and yet there is no contradiction. Or again, to bring the case nearer

home, let us take as an illustration the experience of every saved sinner. 'By nature Ephes. ii. 3, a child of wrath, even as others,' he was under the condemnation of eternal punishment. He had, it may be again and again, neglected and rejected the Saviour. The 'gift Rom. vi. 23, of God, which is eternal life,' had been again and again offered for his acceptance, and refused; but once more he comes under the power of the Gospel. A sinner under the condemnation to eternal punishment, he hears the loving voice of Jesus saying, 'Come unto Matt. xi. 28, Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' He comes, and under the influence of the Spirit of God he is 'born again;' he 'passes from death unto John iii. 3, John v. 24, 1 John v. 14, life.' Yet there is no contradiction. It is the circumstances which have changed. It is the 'fearful and unbelieving' who 'shall Rev. xxi. 8, have their part in the lake of fire, which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death;' but the sinner who has ceased to be numbered amongst the fearful and unbelieving has left the category of the condemned. We find the same law working in

nature and we are not surprised, for what are the laws of nature (as has been often observed) but the expression of the will of our Heavenly Father manifested in His natural kingdom? Every day one law of nature is suspended, and overcome or reversed by another. When the apple fell in Newton's garden, did not the law of gravity overcome the law by which the apple had been secured to the parent stem? and when a hand is stretched out to catch the apple as it falls, the hand, by the law of life residing in it, overcomes that great law of nature by which the worlds are hurled upon their courses, and the rhythm of the universe is maintained.

There are, moreover, numerous Scriptural instances in which God represents Himself as reversing His own decree.

Jude 5.

'The Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed them that believed not.'

Jer. xxvi.
19.

Hosea xi.
8, 9.

The Lord repented of the evil He had pronounced against Judah. 'How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as

Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within Me; My repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man.'

It is a remarkable feature of God's moral government, that He often does not, in pronouncing judgment on the sinner, weaken the force of the threatened penalty by at the same time announcing the mercy which He proposes to show towards the offender. The stern warning to our first parents, 'In the day that ye eat thereof ye shall surely die,' was not coupled with any intimation of the means which God then purposed to provide to restore life to the sinner through the Saviour's death.

Examples of this might be multiplied, and cases in point may be found in God's treatment of the Jewish nation, in casting them down from their position of special privilege, and of the Gentile nations, in receiving them into His favour; of Hezekiah, in healing him when 'sick unto death,' and of the great city 2 Kings xx.

Jonah iii.
4, 10.

of Nineveh which God had condemned, saying, 'Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed;' but, on the repentance of the inhabitants, 'God repented of the evil that He had said that He would do unto them, and He did it not.'

Lam. iii. 31.
Is. ciii. 9.
Jer. xviii.
7, 8.

God lays it down as one of the fundamental principles of His moral government, that 'He will not cast off for ever,' 'neither will He keep His anger for ever;' and, 'at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, to pluck up and to destroy it, if that nation turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.'

If this power and willingness of God to reverse His own decrees against the sinner, conditioned only on his repenting and turning to Him, is denied to God, we must at once strike such words as 'pardon,' 'remission of sins,' 'forgiveness,' and 'mercy' out of our Bibles; and if it is said that this power is only exercised or exercisable by God in this world, then let there be, at any rate, some attempt made to test the statement, as, in the absence of Scriptural support for such a pro-

position, we may apply to it the words of the Sixth Article of the Church of England : 'Whatsoever is not read in Holy Scripture, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith.'

IV.

The direct testimony of God's Word upon the subject gives the assurance of the ultimate salvation of all men.

Having now satisfied ourselves (1) that God can have no pleasure in the eternal torture of sinners ; (2) that notwithstanding the stern denunciation contained in the Bible of eternal punishment against the unrepentant, He is able, through the atoning death of Christ, to pardon sin not only in this world, but also in that which is to come ; and (3) not only is there no Scriptural warrant for forbidding us to hope that He will do so, but (4) that looking at His character and the state of the lost in hell, we are justified in

that hope—we next inquire whether or not the Scripture contains any further distinct teaching upon the subject. If the doctrine drawn from the texts which teach the eternity of punishment is only half the truth, and as such calculated to give us false views of God (although He may have intentionally allowed those false views to be obtained through so many years, because men were not capable of appreciating a higher ideal), we may feel sure that the other half of the truth, which will give us just conceptions of God, will be found in the Bible as a reward of our diligent search ; and such is indeed the case. To one who has been brought up in the orthodox view, the result of such a search can only be described as a wonderful and glorious surprise, and the search itself as the inauguration of a new era in spiritual experience. Text after text is found which, because it is directly opposed to the orthodox view, is by those who hold that view habitually ignored or explained away, and denied its only possible straightforward meaning : and it is only when the blinding effect of a preconceived opinion

is realized, that the student of Scripture, approaching the subject for the first time with unbiassed freedom, can understand the blindness which led him to accept a theory which so openly contradicts the plain Word of God. Preconceived opinions are the great stumbling-block which hinders the advance of many in the knowledge of God ; and the great duty of the Christian towards the truth is to launch out in dependence on the Heavenly Guide alone upon the ocean of divine revelation, and to maintain constantly an openness to receive light from above, and, whilst ‘holding fast that which is good,’ to be ready at all times to prove that which he has received, and to hold it always subject to the correction of the Holy Spirit of God.

Having seen that there is no Scriptural authority whatever for the contrary view, the believer in Universal Salvation has in the first place, when he is asked for ‘a reason for the hope which is in him,’ the whole of the promises of pardon and forgiveness forming the glorious Gospel at his disposal, which are not in one single instance fettered with

any limitation to this world, and are, we must therefore conclude, valid, both for this world and the next; and these would in themselves be sufficient for the purpose, but he has in addition all the texts in which God's changeless character is set forth.

This limiting of the exercise of God's prerogative within the narrow bounds of time is surely, if not warranted by that which He has Himself revealed, an insult to His character. He is 'The Almighty,' and must *therefore* be consistent. He is the 'Eternal,' and *therefore* 'He changes not;' and yet He is represented by those who hold the orthodox view as patient and merciful for the few short years of a man's life, and relentless and inexorable throughout the rest of eternity. Is this consistent with His own description of Himself as 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,' and the One 'with Whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning'? Surely not: neither is it consistent with anything which we can learn of His character from His works around us. Those who study nature, and in studying nature (perhaps unconsciously

Mal. iii. 6.

Heb. xiii. 8.

James i. 17.

sometimes) study nature's God, have shown us how in the physical world God has limited Himself by certain laws which can be traced and recognised in their action in the universe. Amongst these none is, perhaps, more clearly demonstrated than the law of continuity, in accordance with which we find as we look around us order and sequence everywhere apparent, and effect following cause with undeviating regularity. That which is now, is the lawful product of that which has preceded it. Nothing is separate and detached, but everything forms an integral part of one great whole: and yet it is suggested that He Who is the designer and maintainer of this ordered system is Himself liable to sudden and spontaneous changes affecting His very nature and attributes. This cannot be! and from this fact that God cannot change we receive the assurance that as the ruined state of His creatures led God 'not to spare His Son, but to deliver Him up for us all,' ^{Rom. viii. 32.} so the ruined state of sinful man in the next world must lead Him to feel and exercise the same pity and saving love, and, if it were need-

John xii.
32.

ful (which we deny), to devise fresh means for the accomplishment of His great purposes of love and mercy towards mankind. That God's great purpose of saving all men will eventually be accomplished, we have the assurance in the Saviour's own words, 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.'

The sufficiency of the atonement of Christ for all men (if they will receive it) is denied only by the Calvinists, and the fact that that great atonement has been made, must endure for all time, and for ever, warrant God in pardoning the sinner ; and in this fact of the all-embracing availability of the atonement we find the true answer to those who hold that in asserting that God can and will deliver from the torments of hell, and eventually receive all men into His presence and favour, we make light of the atonement. Just the contrary is the case, for it is rather those who limit the efficacy of the atonement to a few short years of each individual's existence, and to a space of time measured it is true by thousands of years, but brief as a moment amongst the ages of eternity, who make

light of it, not those who hold that its benefit shall be available so long as there is a sinner still needing salvation ; and it may well be argued that he makes light of the atonement of Christ who excludes from participation in its benefits the great majority of mankind.

‘ But the love of God is broader
 Than the measures of man’s mind ; Faber.
 And the heart of the Eternal
 Is most wonderfully kind.
 For we make His love too narrow
 By false limits of our own ;
 And we magnify His strictness,
 With a zeal He will not own.’

One of the most clearly revealed and, to the natural man who ‘receiveth not the things of the Spirit, for they are foolishness¹⁴ unto him,’ unpalatable truths in the Bible is the doctrine of man’s innate sinfulness. So early in the world’s history as the time of the flood we read that, ‘God saw that the wicked-¹⁵ Gen. vi. 5.
 ness of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.’ We read Job’s opinion of himself, ‘Behold, I am vile’; Job. xl. 4.

‘Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.’ And David’s inspired statements coincide: ‘The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see whether there were any that did understand and seek after God. Behold, they are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy, there is none that doeth good.’ And in Rom. iii. 10-12, we read: ‘There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.’ And in Eccl. vii. 20, we find the same truth stated thus: ‘There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.’ This sinful nature man has inherited from his father, Adam; and accordingly we read that ‘In Adam all die.’ And when attempts are made to limit the all-embracing width of this statement, such an attempt meets at once with an indignant challenge; but when the whole text is cited, and it is asserted that ‘As in Adam all die, *even so* in Christ shall all be

Job xlii. 6.

Psa. xiv.
1-3.1 Cor. xv.
22.

made alive,' the same champions who defended the first assertion enter the arena to deny (because, forsooth, the simple interpretation of the second half of the text does not fall in with their views of the state of the lost) that the 'even so' which connects the two propositions is to be received, and to assert that whilst 'in Adam *all* die,' 'in Christ "some only" shall be made alive.'

The text we are now considering receives considerable emphasis from the context in which it stands. If it stood alone, it might conceivably be argued that it referred exclusively to the death and life of the body, and that its meaning was fully satisfied by the expectation of the resurrection spoken of in Dan. xii. 2 : 'Some to everlasting life, but some to shame and everlasting contempt.' But in the succeeding verses we are told that after they that are Christ's at His coming have been made alive, there will, before the end can come, be a delivery up, by Christ, of the Kingdom to God; and when that delivery up has taken place, 'then cometh the

1 Cor. xv.
24, 25.

I Cor. xv.
28.

end,' 'when He shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put down all enemies under His feet.' 'And when all things have been subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.' Here we have a complete sequence of events, after those who are Christ's at His coming (His believing people in this world) are made alive, culminating at the end in 'God being all in all;' and, in view of these events, it is impossible to deny all doctrinal significance to the 22nd verse, and, if it has any significance at all, it must be that, as the 'all' in the first part is universal, even so the 'all' in the second part is universal too. The same comparison, drawn by God Himself, is to be found *no less than four times repeated* in the following text: 'Wherefore *as* by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. Therefore *as* by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; *so* by the righteousness of

Rom. v. 12,
18-21.

one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For *as* by one man's disobedience many were made sinners ; *so* by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. *Moreover* the law entered, that sin might abound. *But* where sin abounded, grace did much more abound : that *as* sin hath reigned unto death, *even so* might grace reign unto eternal life.' Here it is clearly not a sufficient interpretation to say that the free gift has come upon all, but the majority reject it and perish ; for then the gift would have come upon a few only to justification of life, and on the remainder to condemnation of death : and we are assured that it has come upon *all men* to justification of life, and therefore we must conclude that those who leave this world without that justification of life coming to them here, must find it in the world to come, otherwise grace certainly does not abound, not only 'even as,' but 'much more' than sin.

The same conclusion, as to the promise of pardon in the world to come, must be drawn from the following :

Rom. xi. 32. 'God hath concluded them (Israel) all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all.'

Gen. xii. 3. 'In thee (Abraham) shall *all* families of the earth be blessed.'

To the above must be added those references to the Purpose and Will of God as being set upon the salvation of all men, which are to be found so freely in His Word. Let us take His Purpose first :

Rom. viii. 32. 'He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.'

1 Tim. i. 15. 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.'

Luke xix. 10. 'The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.'

Phil. ii. 9-11. 'God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name ; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth and' (and this is very remarkable) '*things under the earth*, and that *every* tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.'

Then there is His Will :

2 Peter iii. 9. 'The Lord is not willing that any should

perish, but that all should come to repentance.'

'God our Saviour will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.'¹ 1 Tim. ii. 4

'He hath abounded toward us (in His grace), having made known unto us the mystery of His Will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times' Ephes. i. 8-10. (compare this with 1 Cor. xv. 22-28) 'He might gather together all things in Christ.'

Now it is very evident that all men have not, when they leave this world, come 'to the knowledge of the truth,' or 'to repentance,' nor has 'every knee bowed at the name of Jesus,' or 'every tongue confessed that He is Lord;' and the only possible deduction, therefore, is, that the rest will come to that repentance and knowledge of the truth, and bow to and confess Christ as Lord in the next world, for the only way of bringing the Scriptures into accord with the orthodox view is to construct the theory, as dishonouring to

God as it is palpably artificial, that God cannot or will not accomplish the great object which He has in His love set before Himself, and that man, God's creature, can finally and for ever baulk the loving purpose of God, and perish in spite of his Maker, which practically amounts to saying that God is not Almighty, and that Satan will triumph in the end, and is at variance with the plain statement of

Heb. ii. 14. Scripture that our Saviour 'took part of flesh and blood, that through death He might destroy the devil.' God's purpose may be delayed, but it cannot be frustrated; and He can afford to wait until man's iron and rebellious will is sufficiently melted in His crucible of fire to receive that imprint which He will
Isa. liii. 11, to put upon it. Eventually the Saviour 'shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied,' and the orthodox view seems to lead up to but a poor satisfaction for such a sacrifice as His. Such is the character of the Saviour as seen in the Bible, that it is well-nigh impossible to conceive that, with the absolute foreknowledge that (except in the case of a pitiful few) His great work of redemption had proved

a final condemnation to mankind, He has, His work ended, 'sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.' Truly He came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. Heb. i. 3.
 'God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might have life;' and nothing less than success in accomplishing to the full His great ministry to the world can so satiate His love that when 'He shall see of the travail of His soul,' He 'shall be satisfied.' Luke ix. 56. John iii. 17. Isa. liii. 11.

Other references to that good time when the Saviour shall be satisfied, and all shall be subject to Him, will be found in the following :

'The Lord shall send Jesus Christ, Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things.' Acts iii. 19-21.

'The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God ; for the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him Who hath subjected the same in hope; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into' Rom. viii. 19-22.

the glorious liberty of the children of God ;
That is, God has subjected the creature to
'vanity' in hope (and surely God's hope must
amount to certainty) that the very subjection
to 'vanity' will bring the soul into submission
to Himself.

1 Tim. ii.
10. The meaning of the plain statement of
God's Word that 'Christ is the Saviour of all
men, specially of those that believe,' is not
exhausted by saying that He is willing to be
the Saviour of all men but is only the Saviour
of some, and that the great majority perish
finally ; but if He saves some from the fires of
hell and the rest in them, we have a full in-
terpretation.

1 Tim. ii.
6.
2 Cor. v.
14. Christ Jesus 'gave Himself a ransom for all,'
and 'One died for all,' are clear statements
which no amount of casuistry can do away
with ; and if He died for all, it is impossible to
suppose that His death has in one single
instance finally and for ever failed to be of
any service or avail ; besides, we have the
additional statement appearing already in the
Revised Version, that because He died,
'therefore all died.'

It is a glorious thing when a soul is brought to realize that it has an individual interest in the death of Christ; but there is a danger lest, in realizing this individual interest, we should lose sight of the fact that God's object in giving His Son was not only to save individuals, but to reconcile the world. In His own words, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.' ^{2 Cor. v. 19.}

The teaching of Christ, however, is essentially a teaching by parables, and it is therefore to be expected that in some of these we should find traces of this doctrine of the eventual salvation of all men; and on referring to the parables of our Lord, we find our expectation fully realized.

When our Lord wished to set before His hearers most graphically the persistency of His love to the lost, He pictured to them seekers, each of whom sought that which he had lost 'until he found it;' and in the parable of the debtor, He says that when the creditor has cast his debtor into prison (*i.e.*, when not only has the condemnation been pronounced, but the sentence is being executed), he shall ^{Luke xv. 4, 8.}

Luke vii.
42.

not *go out* UNTIL he has paid the uttermost farthing, from which He clearly implied that he should go out if, and when, the debt was paid ; and though the sinner can never pay the debt himself, yet it is expressly to pay that debt for him that the Saviour died : ‘A certain man had two debtors . . . and when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.’

Luke xii.
47, 48.

Again, in comparing the punishment to fall on the servants who knew, and those who knew not their Lord’s will, it is not, as is often taught, the quality and severity of the punishment which are compared, but its quantity and duration (few stripes and many stripes, not light and heavy stripes, are spoken of).

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus has been already referred to, giving as it does indications of the progress of the soul in hades towards that true repentance which removes the only barrier between the sinful soul and the sinner’s Saviour, and the removal of which barrier enables the sinner to come to Him Who has in His own person bridged

the gulf which, in this world as much as in the world to come, separates those who are Christ's from those who are not.

This is the testimony of God in His Word ; let us take care how we treat it. Let us beware lest we fall into the sin of the elder son in the parable (not the eldest son, be it observed, for Christ is the first-fruits, and afterwards come those who are Christ's at His coming, and who may well be represented by the elder son), who, when the younger son who had ruined himself, and been led at last to seek his Father's face only by the punishment brought on him by his sins, ^{Luke xv. 28.} was received into the home again, ' was angry and would not come in.' Let us be warned by the example of Jonah, and avoid his sin, who, when God's condemnation against ^{Jonah iii. iv.} Nineveh was reversed, was ' exceedingly displeased ' and ' very angry,' and said, ' Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech Thee, my life from me ; for it is better for me to die than to live. Then said the Lord, Doest thou well to be angry ? thou hast had pity on the gourd, and should not I spare Nineveh ?'

a question answered in the affirmative by the character there given of God as 'a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenting Him of the evil,' (*i.e.*, reversing His own condemnation on the repentance of the sinner).

Those who deny or explain away the literal meaning of the Scriptures teaching the eventual universality of salvation, because they think that they are inconsistent with the eternity of punishment, make use of the same false principle of interpretation as do those who deny or explain away those in which eternal punishment is so clearly taught. Both truths are set before us with equal clearness in God's Word, and both therefore must be equally true. It is not our place, therefore, to deny either, because at first sight they seem to be incompatible, but to seek grace and guidance from the Holy Spirit rightly to divide the Word of truth, and to receive every word of God as good, and to see how truths to a casual observer the most discordant, yet when united and both honestly accepted by our faith, together form one

chord of harmony. Thus we shall see that the key to the difficulties surrounding this perplexed question lies in that glorious 'everlasting Gospel' which is 'the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.'

Rev. xiv. 6.
Rom. i. 16.

V.

The creation of the universe a necessity of science.

THOUGH without any very direct reference to the subject - matter treated of in the previous pages, the bearing of the law of the conservation of matter and energy upon the question of the scientific accuracy of the account of Creation contained in the Bible is so remarkable and interesting, that no apology is required for referring to it here.

It is not too much to say that, granted the fact that the so-called 'Material Universe' is finite, that is to say, is bounded by limitations both of time and space, the only logical deduction from the law in question (or rather from its converse, which is equally with it received by men of science as a

law of nature) is not only a 'creation,' but a creation exactly in accord with the account given us in the first chapter of the Book of Genesis; and although creation—that is, a sudden springing of matter into existence uncaused by any natural law except the Will of God—seems, so far as we are at present acquainted with natural sequences, a breach of that law of continuity which requires an adequate natural cause for every natural phenomenon, if it is a breach to which science leads us, we must accept it either as an indication of the possibility of the existence of some higher law of continuity behind that law which we have been able to investigate, or as one with those numerous problems and phenomena which we are at present unable to unravel or understand, but of which our ignorance becomes more apparent as our knowledge of nature increases.

The material universe consists of matter, or the elements, whether visible or invisible, of which material things consist; and energy, or that influence which, operating on matter in the form of the various forces of nature,

energizes the whole, and combines the elements into the material forms so familiar to us. And the law of the conservation of matter and energy, shortly stated, is that in all its manifold changes (as, for instance, in the case of matter, when a candle in burning changes from the visible form of fat to the invisible form of gas ; or the invisible gases oxygen and hydrogen, under the influence of the electric spark, unite, and form water ; or in the case of energy, when it passes from the form of electricity into that of heat, magnetism, etc.) neither the matter nor energy is wasted or destroyed, but remains always the same in amount ; and the converse, viz., that the quantity of matter and energy in the universe (taking the word as before in its widest sense, as embracing all matter and energy now existing) is incapable of being added to or increased, is equally true, and therefore we see at once that the quantity of matter and energy in the universe at any, however distant, point of time, looking either forwards or backwards, must be exactly the same as that existing at the present time.

That the universe is bounded both by time and space seems to many an almost self-evident proposition. That it must come to an end in time is sufficiently obvious, seeing that the only alternative is, that it should exist for all eternity, a mere dead, inert, amorphous mass, everlastingly objectless and useless, and without the power of entering into any new combination; for though the quantity of energy cannot, as we have seen, decrease, it has a persistent tendency to dissipate itself into space, and must eventually become so widely diffused that for all practical purposes it will some day have ceased to exist, and, further, its availability as a power in the universe, is by degradation, or loss of tension, becoming daily less and less, and the tendency of all matter is therefore to drift into a state in which, deprived of all available energy, nothing further can take place; and if the universe will have an end, it needs no argument to prove that it had a beginning.

Working backwards then from the universe in its present form, or from that future point

in time when all the energy now in it will (in the sense of having lost its availability) have been used up, we must come to the beginning of all things, when none of the energy had been used up, and no energy having been expended in its combination and development into varied forms, all matter (though capable of universal combination and development) was in an amorphous, uncombined and undeveloped state. 'In the beginning' the universe existed, but it existed in a state accurately described by the words 'without form and void.' The universe *was*, but it was an embryo universe, full of the possibility of future development, existing just as the chicken exists within the shell of an egg before the process of incubation has commenced. To this point science irresistibly conducts us, but further it cannot go. If we ask : Whence came this mass of matter, this tremendous energy ? it cannot tell. In the beginning they appear together suddenly upon the scene, with all their vast capacities ; but when we seek to go behind them we are foiled in our attempt. And it is very remark-

able that it is precisely at this point that the Bible takes the matter up, and not only presents us with a picture of the universe at the beginning exactly corresponding with the picture drawn by science, but goes further, and answers our question as to the origin both of matter and energy, and shows that there is no breach of continuity, but a cause for their existence, and informs us that their origin and cause is God. And this cause is a natural one, seeing that if God is at all, He must contain within His Being the sum of all unknown natural laws.

Gen. i. 1, 2. 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void ; and darkness covered the face of the deep.' This is *all* which, as a reference to the Revised Version will show, the first chapter of Genesis says on the subject of the creation of the material universe. The idea of creation is only twice afterwards introduced into the chapter, when it is repeated in connection with the introduction into the world of 'life' and 'spirit,' neither of which forms any part of the material universe, and the

very existence of which science acknowledges itself unable to account for, or (in the case of the latter) even to recognise.

The remainder of the chapter contains an account of the process of incubation which followed creation, and details the various steps which God took in the course of developing that which He had already created, and with the aid of those mighty tools which He has devised in the laws of nature (in which certainly His 'Spirit moves,' and He may be said to speak), hewing out the rough material, and bringing the finished product to the form in which we find it now. That vortex motion may have been the means by which development took place is possible, but the vortex theory does not touch the question of creation, seeing that it assumes the existence of matter of which a vortex must be composed, and energy by which it is held together and directed, and it is interesting to observe (although it is not the 'how' of development, but the earlier 'how' of existence which we are considering) that (as has been pointed out both by Pro-

fessor Dawson and others) the order of development given in the Bible is the same as the order of development pointed out by science.

This distinction between creation and making or development is now quite clear in the Revised Version of the Bible, and cannot be too rigidly maintained. The popular error of regarding the idea of creation intended to be conveyed by the Bible as that of the creation of a finished universe, is an idea the very opposite of that conveyed by the clear statement that when first called into existence the universe was not merely incomplete and unfinished, but was in 'darkness,' 'without form,' and 'void;' and at the same time that we recognise this, it is necessary to guard ourselves against that insularity in considering the universe which the fact of our existence on this comparatively small planet naturally imprints on our ideas, and to observe that the account of the creation given in the first chapter of Genesis is not an account of the creation of the world only, or even primarily, but that the expressions used, 'the heaven

and the earth,' 'the earth and the deep,' are expressions of the widest signification, embracing the whole material universe. We see, then, that the scientific and Biblical accounts of the beginning of the universe are identical in all respects, except that the revelation of the Bible adds one fact to the revelation of science, a fact gathered from a region into which science is unable to penetrate, and saves us from any real breach of continuity by exhibiting to us God as the cause, at once natural and supernatural, of an effect altogether unprecedented, and for which no less cause could well be adequate. Can such a wonderful correspondence between the creation of science and the creation of the Bible be a mere chance? and if not, then the conclusion is irresistibly forced upon us that in the Biblical account of creation an Intelligence superior to man has spoken, and having tested all we can test of the communication of that Intelligence, and found it true, we are warranted in accepting, as being also true, that one additional fact which the same Intelligence communicates, that it was 'God' Who,

as the first great cause, satisfied the legitimate requirements of the law of continuity, and Who, having (according to a law or laws we cannot as yet identify) created an embryo universe, has ever since ruled, guided, and developed it, according to laws with which we have succeeded in becoming acquainted.

THE END.

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